

A LITTLE OLD REPORT by Fay D. Bellamy

How long will it take before we, SNCC, stop letting other people put us in "bags". I've noticed many things happening over and over again. For example: at our last staff meeting, we spent much time stating, re-emphasizing and re-stating that the press would become an instrument that would be used for our best advantage only and as little as possible.

Since that staff meeting in May, 1966, we have once again been impaled on the many stakes the press has set for us. We're now known as the militant Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. How would they, the press, know if we were militant or not? The only time they've seen us in action is in our non-violent acts with the exception of two or three occasions. Even then those were when people used their hands to defend themselves. It has never been reported by the press that any SNCC people had guns, grenades or things of that sort. We should ask ourselves what they mean when they call us Militant, and why.

The Freedom Organization is called the "Black Panther Party". Why? Do you know of any other political party in this country called by its symbol? Have you ever heard the Republican Party referred to as the Elephant Party of the Democratic Party referred to as the Jackass Party? You have not and you will not. Once again, ask yourselves WHY? Why do we continue to fall in the same trick bags? I can remember very distinctly when Miss Baker and some other people got up at the last staff meeting and told us that the press, too much of it, would only do damage to our work or the work that we might attempt to do. Most of us, at that time, agreed with her. There was a general consensus that we would disregard the press as much as possible, but like everything else, it went the way of the "consensus that died", or maybe it just faded away.

At the present time and for the last few months, our chairman goes from city to city, making speeches, appearing on "Meet the Press", "The Mike Wallace Show", etc. You name it, he's probably been on it. Our communications department has a lot to do with setting up those interviews; our secretary that has been assigned to him and our offices in various cities take part in setting up those interviews. Now if this is the way we want to operate, and if this is the way we think things should continue to go, we should keep on talking to the press, instead of talking to the people. Even though we know in advance that everything Stokely or anyone else from this organization says will be turned completely around. Knowing also that that person will probably be misquoted again and again. I would feel different about this, if we didn't know what was happening and we didn't have that experience, but supposedly we do. I don't understand how we can keep going back and doing the same things over again. It makes one wonder if we are addicted to the press. That maybe it's a habit we can't kick.

The press doesn't ask about the Free D. C. Movement, or what we plan to do in Chicago or anywhere else that we may be working. They don't ask what it is we plan to do in Vine City or Philadelphia. They don't ask what our future plans are as far as our projects are concerned. What are the questions they do ask?

"Are you now in court?"

"Mr. Carmichael, what will you do if you're drafted?" and so it goes. Stokely does not really speak to the fact that most of the men in our organization are on the verge of being drafted or have been drafted. He does not speak to the fact or relate to these people the reasons why we in SNCC feel this is happening. He calls our black troops, "Black Mercenaries." From my point of view, that is quite unfair and uncalled for. Knowing well in advance that many brothers go into the service as a way out of the ghetto's or the South, and that many volunteer because they know that pay check will always be on time. We know many young brothers have to leave high school or feel there is no reason to finish and as a way out, many go into the armed forces. Most of them cannot go to college and many feel at a loss of what they should do in this country in order to "live like men." Knowing these things, how can we call them "Black Mercenaries."

It's okay for Stokely to say, "Man, I'll just go to jail," when a reporter says "what will you do if drafted." The rest on the block can't say that. He doesn't have an organization behind him. He knows it won't be a sentence of three years with him getting out on an appeal bond. There won't be people like Howard Moore, Arthur Kinoy or Bill Kunstler to work for him in the courts. Yes, Stokely can say it and be confident, because he knows it is very unlikely that he'll go to jail for any great length of time.

Once again, I ask, how can we call them Black Mercenaries? I say we, because if our chairman says it, we're all responsible. How long did it take a few of us or should I say most of us, to get to the so-called international crossroads?

How long did it take for us to get to the point where we even addressed ourselves to the draft issue or the war issue? How many debates did we have before even daring to speak out on Vietnam, South Africa or many more of the very important issues of today?

I'm sure, many of us can remember when our only concern was with the movement as it existed here in the United States, and here only. It took us years to get to this point. Do we feel that by calling our brothers names that they will arrive at this same point in a matter of weeks? Wouldn't it be better to be more explicit on the reasons why we're against the war? Wouldn't it be better to give a few facts rather than call a few names? If we continue in the direction we're in now, this organization will no longer be a peace civil rights group. We will become a peace group, in name if not in fact. At one time, I was told that HUAC was trying to get a resolution passed and were planning to base their investigation on the fact that we were against the war. Dig it.

With our help, the press has done it again. It's sort of like a gigantic bone-crusher or back-breaker. It would appear that they are trying to help as much as possible in breaking our backs. At the present time, there is no SNCC, there is only a Stokely Carmichael with a group of "followers behind him. The people who work those projects and the dangers that still exist for them, have been ignored by many of us. Tge

The press is not stupid and neither is the Establishment. Things that happened in the past are relative to the things happening today. But we always forget that those same events will also be relative to what occur in the future.

Not too long ago, to be exact, on November 8th and for days thereafter, some people came to the Atlanta office and later went on to Alabama. Most of them stated they were asked to come down by Stokely to protect the people during the elections.

A lot of these people had...no, I shall go so far as to say that all of these people had weapons such as rifles, hand grenades and one told me he had a machine gun, etc. I'm not against anyone having that equipment, but the world should not be told about it. Another thing is that they were just so far ahead of everyone else, "that we just weren't ready for them." Maybe, just maybe, they're right. But it appears that they only drew those weapons on people in SNCC. These people did not know us. We had no idea they were coming down and this was the first time they had been to the Atlanta office. Not knowing us, they were quick to let us know what equipment they had brought with them. They made a point of letting just about everyone in the office know, and I'm sure the same thing happened in Alabama. Out of the nine people, only two of them seemed to have their wits about them. Although they knew none of us personally, why would they volunteer so much information. (The two I refer to above are Shonda and Obaka).

They went on to Alabama and later returned to Atlanta where they stayed around for a week or so. They became very angry, because we, SNCC, had invited them down, but yet we "aren't feeding them." We were not taking care of them. They're not as warm as they felt they should be; they're not getting three meals a day. The complaints were numerous. They came to the Nelson St. office and had a meeting with Forman and a few other people from the Atlanta office. They questioned him about the structure of SNCC.

Forman tried to explain things to them the best he could. He tried to explain how we operate. It was quite evident that they were disappointed with SNCC as they've seen it. They aren't the first and definitely won't be the last. As one of them stated at that meeting, "Man, we feel like this was a set up...the way you (SNCC) set up the project and when we get here, ...".

Hell, they weren't half as upset as I was. I felt like we had been set up. Maybe Stokely knew a few of them or all of them and the project or area where they came from, they were probably known, but none of us knew them.



Suppose, just suppose it was a set up for us. As usual, we would have walked right into it without looking around or looking back.

Just a few weeks ago, near the end of October, 20 white men were arrested for attempting to lay seige on a few camps around the New York area. Their weapons were confiscated and believe me, there was a lot to confiscate.

The police said they found more than a million rounds of ammunition in addition to mortars, bazookas, grenades, more than 150 rifles, some of them semi-automatic, trench knives, brass knuckles, walkie-talkies, bomb components, 11 machine guns, rocket launchers, pistols, steel helmets and camouflage and that is only a portion of the equipment found.

But then, these were white men.

Yet some of us will invite people down and push them on other people. When do we learn? Have you forgotten the dynamite case in Philadelphia. Those men who were arrested in October were some members of a group called the Minute-men and for a period of possibly two days, they appeared on the front page of newspapers around the country. Then it was pushed far into the background.

For supposedly having 2½ sticks of dynamite, we received, through the generosity of the press, four inch headlines in various states for almost three weeks. People wrote about us in their editorials. Yes, for a few weeks we were known as a militant organization.

If we're going to have weapons, well and good, but there is a way to have them. If you plan to start a revolution, I'm sure there is a way to do that.

We are able to do many things at once as we could prove by our history. It is my hope that we will refrain from letting the press or anyone else bind us into thinking or feeling what they want us to. I would argue for a little more talking to black people and less talking to the press. We know how to manipulate. Let us begin to do just that, but in the black communities; not to the white press who will distort everything we say.